CubaBrief: Why is Cuba on the state sponsor of terrorism list? Because it continues to sponsor and support terrorism

“Fidel Castro helped the M-19 in many of its interventions in Colombia. It must even be said that M-19 troops were trained in Cuba, which separated the Cuban government from the Colombian government. Relations were broken,” said Gustavo Petro, a former member of the terrorist group M-19, and today president of Colombia, in 2016.

Oiga Noticias

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The State Sponsors of Terrorism list came into existence in 1979, and Cuba was added to the list in 1982 due to its links to the M-19 terrorist group in Colombia, facilitating drug smuggling to the U.S., and providing arms.

Terrorism is a fundamental aspect of Castroism. Fidel Castro, and his fellow revolutionaries, seized power in 1959 through domestic terrorism. Throughout the 1950s, Castro’s July 26th Movement carried out numerous bombings that terrorized and killed Cuban citizens.

The Cuban dictatorship has a track record of sponsoring international terrorism over its entire 65 year rule. This 2024 short documentary "Terrorism: The Cuban Connection" offers some highlights, and this CubaBrief will highlight a few episodes that focus on the United States, Europe and the role played by Cuban diplomats, resulting in their expulsion from France and the United States.

The Failed 1962 Black Friday Plot

Elsa Montero Maldonado and Jose Gomez Abad, a husband and wife team, Roberto Santiesteban Casanova, an attache at the Cuba Mission to the United Nations in New York City, diplomats who in reality were State Security agents, along with Antonio Sueiro and Jose Garcia Orellana, plotted to murder large numbers of New Yorkers in a planned terrorist attack on the Friday after Thanksgiving in 1962, detonating 500 kilos of explosives inside Macy's, Gimbel's, Bloomingdale's and Manhattan's Grand Central Terminal.

(NY6) NEW YORK, Nov. 20--EXIT BY REQUEST--Jose Gomez, 21, and his wif
Elsa, 20, attaches at the Cuban mission to the U.N., head for plane
York's Idlevld airport last night, bound for Mexico City. They left
State Department request, accused by the FBI of supplying weapons to
Castro ring in New York. Three others were arrested last weekend by
FBI on charges of conspiracy to commit sabotage. (AP Wirephoto)(JS307
62

Cuban diplomats Elsa Montera Maldonado and Jose Gomez Abad, a husband and wife team at the Cuba Mission in New York City expelled from the United States in 1962.

Fortunately, the FBI discovered the plot and prevented what would have been a significant loss of life. Both Elsa Montero Maldonado and Jose Gomez Abad were expelled for their role in the planned terrorist attack. Roberto Santiesteban Casanova, Antonio Sueiro, and Jose Garcia Orellana were prosecuted, and later traded for Americans jailed in Cuba.

3 Suspects Arrested in the Cuban Sabotage Case
Associated Press
Roberto Santiestebán Casanova of the Cuban mission.
United Press International
Marino Antonio Estebán Del Carmen Sueiro y Cabrera.
United Press International
José García Orellana, whose shop concealed arms cache.
The New York Times
Pistols, hand grenades, incendiary devices and detonators that were a part of cache confiscated by the F.B.I. Fluorescent fixture, left, was used to hide the contraband.

Three suspects, and their weapons stash.

Carlos and the Tricontinental

Havana would go on to redouble its efforts to improve its capacity to promote and carry out terrorist attacks around the world. The Tricontinental Conference, held in Havana from January 3-16, 1966, and the establishment of the Organization for the Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America OSPAAL sought to support and train terrorist groups worldwide, including in the United States.

Havana would go on to have “successes”.

euronews

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One of them was a young Venezuelan named after the Soviet Union's founding leader, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, also known as Vladimir Lenin. Ilyich Ramírez Sánchez (age 17) attended the 1966 Tricontinental Conference. Afterwards, Ilyich spent the summer at Camp Matanzas, a guerrilla warfare school run by the Cuban DGI. Following a string of terrorist attacks across Europe, he picked the alias "Carlos.

Nan Robertson in a special to The New York Times on July 11, 1975 published the article "FRANCE EXPELLING 3 CUBAN OFFICIALS" that reports on the link between Cuban diplomats and Carlos the Jackal.

> "France expelled three high-ranking Cuban diplomats today in connection with the worldwide search for a man called Carlos, who is believed to be an important link in an international terrorist network." [...]"The French Interior Ministry said that investigators were convinced that the terrorist network had been helped significantly by the intelligence services of "certain nations."[...] French authorities have also said that Carlos may have been directly involved with a siege at the French Embassy in The Hague last September and a grenade attack the same month on Le Drugstore on the Left Bank here, in which 3 persons were killed and 22 wounded. France expelled three high-ranking Cuban diplomats on July 10, 1975. "The Cubans, according to the French Interior Ministry, were "constant visitors" to the Paris hideout of Carlos". The Cuban diplomats on whom expulsion orders were served today were Raul Rodriguez Sainz, 32 years old, first secretary for cultural affairs; Pedro Lara Zamora, 33, deputy cultural attache, and Ernesto Reyes Herrera, 32, the chief of protocol. André Mousset, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, added that the Carlos affair was looking more and more like an "international terrorist plot."

FALN Terrorists backed by Cuba, and the bombing campaign in New York City

Real Crime

Watch on

Six months earlier on the other side of the Atlantic another group of Puerto Rican terrorists linked to Havana carried out an act of terrorism that claimed the lives of New Yorkers.

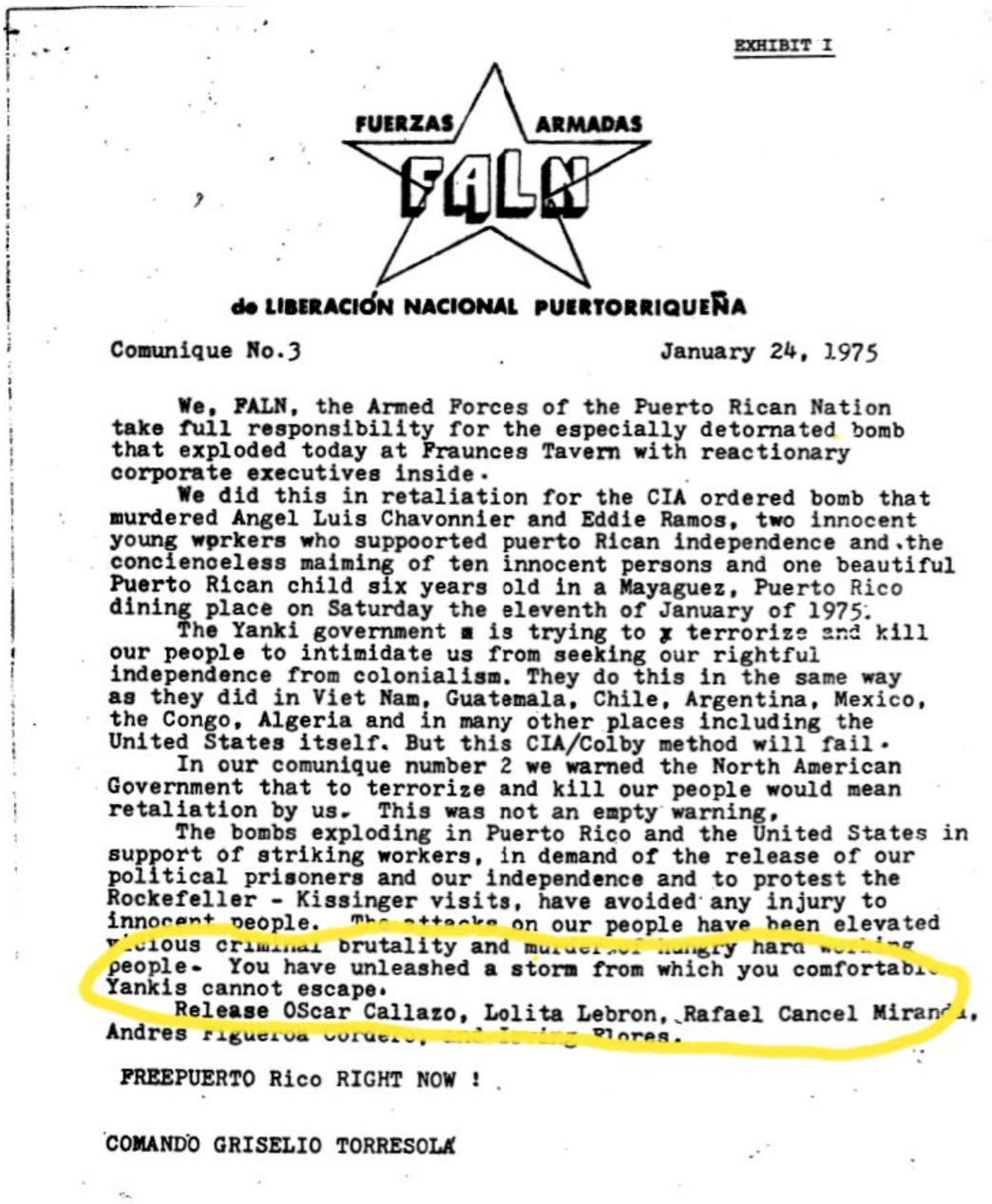


EXHIBIT I

FUERZAS ARMADAS

FALN

de LIBERACIÓN NACIONAL PUERTORRIQUEÑA

Comunique No.3 January 24, 1975

We, FALN, the Armed Forces of the Puerto Rican Nation take full responsibility for the especially detornated bomb that exploded today at Fraunces Tavern with reactionary corporate executives inside.

We did this in retaliation for the CIA ordered bomb that murdered Angel Luis Chavonnier and Eddie Ramos, two innocent young wprkers who suppoorted puerto Rican independence and the concienceless maiming of ten innocent persons and one beautiful Puerto Rican child six years old in a Mayaguez, Puerto Rico dining place on Saturday the eleventh of January of 1975.

The Yanki government is trying to terrorize and kill our people to intimidate us from seeking our rightful independence from colonialism. They do this in the same way as they did in Viet Nam, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, the Congo, Algeria and in many other places including the United States itself. But this CIA/Colby method will fail.

In our comunique number 2 we warned the North American Government that to terrorize and kill our people would mean retaliation by us. This was not an empty warning.

The bombs exploding in Puerto Rico and the United States in support of striking workers, in demand of the release of our political prisoners and our independence and to protest the Rockefeller - Kissinger visits, have avoided any injury to innocent people. The attacks on our people have been elevated vicious criminal brutality and murder of hungry hard working people. You have unleashed a storm from which you comfortable Yankis cannot escape.

Release OScar Callazo, Lolita Lebron, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Andres Figueroa Cordero, and Irving Flores.

FREEPUERTO Rico RIGHT NOW !

COMANDO GRISELIO TORRESOLA

The FALN was responsible for the January 24, 1975 explosion at Fraunces Tavern, which killed Alejandro Berger (age 28), James Gezork (age 32), Frank Connor (age 33), Harold H. Sherburne (age 66) and wounded over 60 others.

AP Archive

Watch on

Zach Dorfman's June 8, 2017 article "How Fidel Castro Supported Terrorism in America" published in The Wall Street Journal reveals: "the FALN was started in the mid-1960's with a nucleus of Puerto Rican terrorists that received advanced training in Cuba. . . . After their advanced training in Cuba they returned to Puerto Rico and a wave of bombings and incendiary incidents struck the [latter] island. Within the last few years they have shifted their activities to the mainland. . . . It is believed that they have maintained close links and may in fact work closely with Cuban intelligence operatives."

Furthermore Mr. Dorfman reported that "[a]ccording to court documents, Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, who is believed to have helped co-found the FALN, told an undercover NYPD officer in 1983 that he had received explosives training in Cuba. And the FBI estimated that by 1973, roughly 135 Puerto Rican militants had received "extensive instruction in guerilla war tactics, preparation of explosive artifacts, and sophisticated methods of sabotage" from Fidel Castro's intelligence services."

The Puerto Rican terrorist group, Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña, (FALN), from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s, carried out more than 130 bombings, including more in New York City.

Cuban backed American terrorists carried out attack on the U.S. Capitol in the 1980s.

Windows blown out by bomb placed in the U.S. Capitol in 1983 to protest rout of Cubans in Grenada

The Castro regime aided and abetted American terrorists that attacked and

bombed the U.S. capitol, and then doubled down when one of those terrorists died. Radio Havana Cuba, official media of the Castro regime, published in 2010 an article titled "Political Activist Marilyn Buck Dies at 62" in which it referred to Marilyn Buck as an "activist and former political prisoner." In reality she was a terrorist who bombed the U.S. Capitol in 1983 to protest the Grenada Invasion.

> "At two minutes before 11 o'clock in the evening on this day in 1983, a thunderous explosion tore through the second floor of the U.S. Capitol's Senate wing. Since the area was virtually deserted at the time, there were no casualties. Minutes before the bomb went off, a caller claiming to represent the "Armed Resistance Unit" warned a Capitol switchboard operator that a bomb had been placed near the chamber — purportedly in retaliation for the recent U.S. military actions in Grenada and Lebanon. The force of the device, hidden under a bench outside the Senate chamber, blew the hinges off the door to the office of Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), the minority leader. It also damaged five paintings, particularly a stately portrait of Massachusetts Sen. Daniel Webster. (The blast tore away Webster's face and left it scattered across the floor tiles in one-inch canvas shards. Senate officials recovered the fragments from debris-filled trash bins. Over the coming months, a conservator painstakingly restored the painting to a credible, if somewhat diminished, version of the original.) The blast also punched a hole in a partition that sent a shower of pulverized brick, plaster and glass into the Republican cloakroom behind the chamber. Although the explosion caused no structural damage to the Capitol, it shattered mirrors, chandeliers and furniture. Officials placed the damage at $250,000."

> "After a five-year investigation, in May 1988 FBI agents arrested seven members of the 'Resistance Conspiracy': Marilyn Jean Buck, Linda Sue Evans, Susan Rosenberg, Timothy Blunk, Alan Berkman, Laura Whitehorn and Elizabeth Ann Duke. They were charged with executing the Capitol bombing as well as triggering similar blasts at Fort McNair and the Washington Navy Yard."

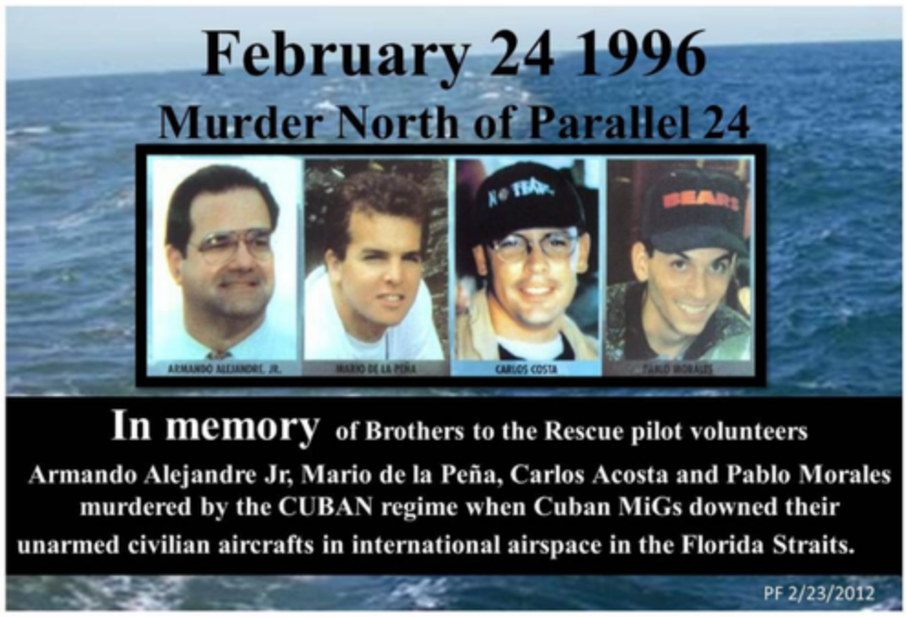
Two years earlier on October 20, 1981 as part of a group of Weather Underground and Black Liberation Army members assaulted a Brink's armored car carrying 1.6 million in Nanuet, NY. Buck was a member of the Black Liberation Army. Two police officers and a guard were murdered during the armed robbery and subsequent escape.

Inside of the bombed Senate office.

Marilyn Buck pleaded guilty in 1988 to the 1983 bombing of the United States Capitol. Her story is put into context in a long piece published in Politico by William Rosenau titled "The Dark History of America's First Female Terrorist Group," which exposes connections to the Cuban dictatorship.

The WASP Network

In 1996 the Cuban Wasp Spy network located in South Florida provided information to Havana that led to the shoot down of two civilian planes in international airspace killing four engaged in the search and rescue of rafters and boat people. This act of state terrorism was widely condemned.


February 24 1996
Murder North of Parallel 24
ARMANDO ALEJANDRE, JR.
MARIO DE LA PEÑA
CARLOS COSTA
PABLO MORALES
In memory of Brothers to the Rescue pilot volunteers
Armando Alejandre Jr, Mario de la Peña, Carlos Acosta and Pablo Morales
murdered by the CUBAN regime when Cuban MiGs downed their
unarmed civilian aircrafts in international airspace in the Florida Straits.
PF 2/23/2012

The WASP Network (La Red Avispa) was made up of over forty officers and agents, four escaped to Cuba when the FBI began rounding them up in 1998. Ten were captured, and five of them pleaded guilty and cooperated with the prosecution and became unpersons in Cuba. The Wasp Network engaged in espionage: targeted U.S. military facilities, planned to smuggle arms and explosives into the United States, infiltrated two non-violent exile groups, and carried out numerous other activities to sow division, shape public opinion, meddle in U.S. elections, and provided information for Operation Scorpion that led to the extrajudicial killings of Armando Alejandre, Carlos Costa, Mario de la Peña and Pablo Morales on February 24, 1996. Operation Scorpion was a Cuban intelligence operation of the Castro regime that sought to destroy Brothers to the Rescue using MiG fighters to shoot down their planes in an act of state terrorism carried out over international airspace.

This network also gathered personal information of American military personnel "compiling the names, home addresses, and medical files of the U.S. Southern Command's top officers and that of hundreds of officers stationed at Boca Chica Naval Station in Key West."

The spies had received instructions from Havana to burn down an airport hangar, sabotage planes, first terrorize with messages that he was "nearing execution," then send a mail bomb to kill a CIA agent living in Bal Harbour identified as Jesus Cruza Flor.

On September 12, 1998, the largest Cuban spy ring ever uncovered in the United States, was broken up by the FBI. Ten suspects were charged as Cuban spies. The Cuban dictatorship has spent decades trying to whitewash this history.

WASP network spies captured in 1998.

Cuba was taken off the SSOT list in 2015 for political reasons, and returned to it on 2021 for continued bad action.

Cuba was taken off the list of state terror sponsors in 2015 when the Obama Administration, responding to demands of Raul Castro, conducted a politicized review to remove the offending state. Six years later in January 2021, Cuba was returned to the list.

The U.S. State Department at the time cited the following four reasons for re-designating the Cuban dictatorship as a sponsor of terrorism.

> 1. “Cuba has refused Colombia’s requests to extradite ten ELN leaders living in Havana after the group claimed responsibility for the January 2019 bombing of a Bogota police academy that killed 22 people and injured more than 87 others.”

> 2. “Cuba also harbors several U.S. fugitives from justice wanted on or convicted of charges of political violence, many of whom have resided in Cuba for decades. For example, the Cuban regime has refused to return Joanne Chesimard, on the FBI’s Most Wanted Terrorists List for executing New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster in 1973; Ishmael LaBeet, convicted of killing eight people in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1972; Charles Lee Hill, charged with killing New Mexico state policeman Robert Rosenbloom in 1971; and others.”

> 3. “Cuba returns to the SST list following its broken commitment to stop supporting terrorism as a condition of its removal by the previous administration in 2015. On May 13, 2020, the State Department notified Congress that it had certified Cuba under Section 40A(a) of the Arms Export Control Act as “not cooperating fully” with U.S. counterterrorism efforts in 2019.”

> 4. “In addition to the support for international terrorism that is the basis for today’s action, the Cuban regime engages in a range of malign behavior across the region. The Cuban intelligence and security apparatus has infiltrated Venezuela’s security and military forces, assisting Nicholas Maduro to maintain his stranglehold over his people while allowing terrorist organizations to operate. The Cuban government’s support for FARC dissidents and the ELN continues beyond Cuba’s borders as well, and the regime’s support of Maduro has created a permissive environment for international terrorists to live and thrive within Venezuela.”

Backing Hamas supporters and their violent protests in the United States

This CubaBrief is focusing on instances of terrorism carried out in the United States by groups supported by the Cuban dictatorship, and has not touched on Havana’s extensive involvement in terrorism in Latin America and in the Middle East, but their support for Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas has had an impact in the United States. Protests in some cases have turned into riots where, for example, American flags were taken down from Union Station in Washington DC and replaced with Palestinian flags, while Cuban

flags were seen in the crowd.

In a formal statement released on October 7, 2023, the same day of the terror attacks, the Cuban Foreign Ministry blamed Israel and its "accomplice," the United States, for the violence. In doing so, it continued to spread a false narrative that originates in Soviet-era anti-Israel propaganda.In this case Havana was blaming the victims of a terrorist attack that murdered 1,200 and kidnapped hundreds of others perpetrated by their longtime ally Hamas.

On October 8, 2023, one day after Hamas terrorists massacred 1,200 people in southern Israel, militant leftists organized a protest in Times Square to celebrate the killings as an act of resistance and waved signs with anti-Semitic slogans and images. The Center for a Free Cuba took notice of this protest at the time, and how official Cuban media was promoting it. On October 11, 2023, The People's Forum (TPF) issued a statement defending their October 8th rally in Times Square, doubling down on their support for the terrorist attack.

The group's co-executive director, Manolo De Los Santos, is a longtime researcher at the Marxist Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research and was "based out of Cuba for many years," where he "worked toward building international networks of people's movements and organizations," according to his biography at the anti-Israel group Black Alliance for Peace. In July 2022, Cuba's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, received De los Santos and executive director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, Vijay Prashad with the aim of "elaborating a new consensus, based on theory and according to the different experiences of social movements and countries, on the path of socialism."

On January 24, 2024 Manolo De Los Santos spoke the quiet part out loud at The People's Forum in New York City: "When we finally deal that final blow to destroy Israel. When the state of Israel is finally destroyed and erased from history, that will be the single most important blow we can give to destroying capitalism."

Biden State Department's wrong steps on Cuba

Despite this, the Biden State Department removed Cuba from the list of countries not cooperating in the fight against terrorism on May 15, 2024. On the same day Joseph Connor, whose father Frank Connor was murdered in a 1975 terrorist attack in New York City by a Cuban backed group, wrote to Secretary Antony Blinken requesting that one of the terrorists involved in the bombing, who is currently harbored by Havana, be returned to the United States to face justice. Four months later, and Mr. Connor has not received a response.

The reason given by Vedant Patel, the principal deputy spokesperson at the State Department on May 16, 2024 "that the circumstances for Cuba's certifications as not fully cooperating country have changed from 2022 to 2023" does not stand up to scrutiny. Patel cited "Cuba's refusal to engage with Colombia on extradition requests for National Liberation Army members supported Cuba's NFCC certification for 2022."

What change took place? Not the behavior of the Cuban dictatorship.

The Colombian terrorists harbored by Havana were not extradited. The new duly elected president of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, a past member of the terrorist group M-19 in Colombia with close ties to the Cuban dictatorship, ordered his attorney general to suspend the arrest warrant "against 17 ELN commanders, including those whose extradition Colombia had previously requested from Cuba." There is also a bit of historical irony. Cuba was first placed on the state sponsor of terrorism list in 1982 when Havana was implicated supplying weapons to the M19 terrorist group from profits raised from trafficking narcotics. Patel also cited that "the U.S. and Cuba resumed law enforcement cooperation in 2023, including on

counterterrorism." First, the phrase "law-enforcement dialogue" is inaccurate. In Cuba, there is no rule of law. "To keep power, the dictatorship maintains a repressive security apparatus that murders nonviolent dissidents extrajudicially. This is not 'law enforcement.' The Cuban dictatorship is a transnational threat, and legitimizing it does not enhance U.S. advocacy for human rights."

What has that meant in practice?

Giving legitimacy to the Cuban dictatorship through this sham "law enforcement cooperation" led Cuban officials meeting with their American counterparts to accuse the United States of "supporting people in Miami plotting 'terrorist' actions against Cuba." Biden administration officials rejected these claims, but the actions of Havana could not be described as a good faith effort, or a reason to cite the dictatorship as fully cooperating in anti-terrorism efforts. Much less grant them access to secure facilities that are of great importance to America's infrastructure.

On June 18, 2024 the Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on antisemitism on college campuses which denounced that Jewish students were being terrorized.

Former top Cuban Communist Party official granted parole arrives in South Florida through Miami International Airport.

On August 16, 2024, Manuel Menéndez Castellanos, a one time top official in Cuba's communist party in Cienfuegos, who represented the Cuban dictatorship in international forums, and was given several awards by the regime, arrived in South Florida through Miami International Airport. The former high ranking communist official arrived in Miami through the Cuban Reunification Parole Program.

WPLG Local 10

Watch on

U.S. Senators send letter to Secretary Blinken over the high risk to national security posed by recent expansion of nonimmigrant visas (NIV) to Communist Cuba

Despite this lapse, the Biden Administration announced that starting on August 19, 2024 would "expand its visa services to facilitate cultural and educational exchanges between" Cuba and the United States.

On September 5, 2024, Senator Rick Scott joined Senator Marco Rubio and Senator Ted Cruz "in sending a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, raising concerns over the high risk to national security posed by the Biden-Harris administration's recent expansion of nonimmigrant visas (NIV) to the communist Cuban regime." In this letter they point out concerns of this opening to Cuba, a state sponsor of terror (SSOT). " Given the risks associated with allowing agents of an SSOT to enter the country, it is unclear how the U.S. might benefit from these NIVs." They also ask some critical questions including, "Has the U.S. government expanded NIVs to the other SSOTs—Iran, North Korea, and Syria? If not, does it plan to do so? Why or why not?"

Office of Senator Rick Scott, September 5, 2024

Sen. Rick Scott Joins Sens. Marco Rubio & Ted Cruz in Letter to Sec. Blinken: America is Being Left Vulnerable to the Cuban Regime

September 5, 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Senator Rick Scott joined Senator Marco Rubio

and Senator Ted Cruz in sending a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, raising concerns over the high risk to national security posed by the Biden-Harris administration's recent expansion of nonimmigrant visas (NIV) to the communist Cuban regime. This expansion of NIV poses a great risk that brings uncertainty about whether individuals are properly vetted, benefits the communist Cuban regime, and is yet another move Biden-Harris has made to appease the Cuban dictatorship.

The senators wrote, "Rather than compelling the Cuban dictatorship to end its human rights abuses and bring democracy to the island, the Biden-Harris Administration has only looked for opportunities to pacify the regime and mend diplomatic relations. We see no other reason for expanding NIVs to Cuban individuals and no justification for why doing so serves the interests of the United States."

Read the full letter HERE or below.

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write with concern over this administration's recent expansion of nonimmigrant visa (NIV) services at the U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba. We believe this decision does not serve America's interests. Instead, it only benefits Cuba's cruel, adversarial regime—a designated State Sponsor of Terrorism (SSOT)—and further endangers our national security.

This NIV expansion will be skewed toward benefitting members of the elite, ruling class. In Cuba, those closest to the regime are given opportunities that are denied to a majority of the island's residents. This includes the opportunity to receive formal higher education and gainful employment. Those who receive NIVs to come to the U.S. for those purposes will very likely have favorable relationships with the regime. Additionally, the regime has historically sponsored athletes, artists, and entertainers to spread its propaganda abroad. Only those who bring good tidings of the regime will be allowed to leave the island. It will be nearly impossible to provide proper vetting of potential NIV recipients given the regime's lack of transparency and our inadequate insight into the island. Given the risks associated with allowing agents of an SSOT to enter the country, it is unclear how the U.S. might benefit from these NIVs. We must assume that this is yet another case of the Biden-Harris Administration's appeasement of the regime.

This is far from the first time the Biden-Harris Administration has taken

steps to placate the Cuban regime by easing migration restrictions. Recently, the administration introduced a parole program that has allowed former high-ranking regime officials and members of state security forces, all of whom are complicit in human rights abuses on the island, to infiltrate and reside in the U.S. The Biden-Harris Administration paused this program only after reports of widespread fraud and abuse, demonstrating our inability to properly vet individuals coming from the island.

What's more, this year, the Biden-Harris Administration lifted Cuba's designation as a "not fully cooperating" country on counterterrorism efforts, in spite of Cuba's status as one of only four SSOTs. The only reasonable motivation for removing this designation would be to mollify the regime that continues to harbor terrorists and U.S. fugitives and support militant groups in the region. The administration has also allowed officials of this terrorist-sympathizing regime to access secure facilities in U.S. airports, jeopardizing the well-being of our citizens and safety measures. Instead of ratcheting up pressure on these terrorist sympathizers, the Biden- Harris Administration has decided to allow Cuban individuals and businesses to open U.S. bank accounts and access online banking—a concession the Cuban dictatorship will certainly leverage to continue funding its human rights abuses.

Rather than compelling the Cuban dictatorship to end its human rights abuses and bring democracy to the island, the Biden-Harris Administration has only looked for opportunities to pacify the regime and mend diplomatic relations. We see no other reason for expanding NIVs to Cuban individuals and no justification for why doing so serves the interests of the United States.

Accordingly, we request you provide a response to the following questions:

How does the expansion of NIVs to Cuban citizens serve America's interests given the concerns highlighted above?

How does expanding NIVs not benefit members of the Cuban regime when it provides more opportunities for fraud and abuse?

How will you ensure that individuals with connections to the regime are not issued NIVs? Please provide a detailed explanation of the vetting process.

How will intracompany transferees receive NIVs if U.S. private sector

companies are prohibited in Cuba?

Has the U.S. government expanded NIVs to the other SSOTs—Iran, North Korea, and Syria? If not, does it plan to do so? Why or why not?

Sincerely,

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https://www.rickscott.senate.gov/2024/9/sen-rick-scott-joins-sens-marco-rubio-ted-cruz-in-letter-to-sec-blinken-america-is-being-left-vulnerable-to-the-cuban-regime

The Washington Stand, September 1, 2024

'Betrayed': Joseph Connor, the Biden-Harris Administration, and the Terrorism Sponsored by Cuba

By Yoe Suarez

Symbols, as Joseph Connor's calm voice and exhausted eyes know, are important in opening understanding and mobilizing our fellow human beings. The story of his father, Frank, which is also his, ended in 1975 as part of a horrifying and symbolic scene: the blowing up of Fraunces Tavern, a cradle of freedom, where George Washington gathered a group of his officers, days after the last of the British troops left American soil, to thank them for their service and bid them an emotional farewell before returning home.

The terrorist William "Guillermo" Morales, of the Marxist Puerto Rican Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), consciously chose that place in New York as a target. Almost 50 years after that explosion, Joe is still fighting for the U.S. Congress to pass a law which is named after his father.

Morales, although prosecuted in the United States and sentenced in 1979 to 89 years in prison in New York and 10 years in federal prison, managed to flee to Mexico. There he was convicted of murdering a Mexican police officer. Mexico rebuffed U.S. President Ronald Reagan's requests for extradition of Morales while he was serving out his sentence in a Mexican prison. Later, Mexican authorities allowed Morales to flee to Cuba in 1983, where he was given political asylum.

Havana was taking care of, more or less, a son (the FALN) that it had fathered with the assistance of its mission to the United Nations, through Julián Torres Rizo, an officer of the General Directorate of Intelligence. Several FALN militants, who sought to establish a Cuban-style regime in an independent Puerto Rico, had received Castroist instruction and advice. Oscar López Rivera, one of its leaders, sentenced to 55 years in prison in the U.S. for violent acts, possession of explosives, and conspiracy to commit attacks, was the center of a media campaign promoted by outlets such as Prensa Latina for decades for his release.

Today, following President Barack Obama's commutation of his sentence, López Rivera attends events in Havana as a guest of honor.

The FALN, with a long criminal history, was part of the international network of proxies with which Castro intended to carry out the world Revolution. And in the middle of that hurricane, Joseph Connor's father, Frank Connor, and three other people died at Fraunces Tavern.

Here is my interview with Joseph.

You were nine years old when your father was murdered. How did your mother and family deliver that horrible fact to you?

Coworkers came from his job and just told us. Awful. Can't put it in a few words. My brother was 11, I was nine years old. That night my dad was going to celebrate my and my brother's birthday. We both were born in January. We were not a family that could afford to have two birthdays.

We had wrestling practice that afternoon after school, but our mother kept us home when she heard he was in the bombing.

When he told us that our father had been killed by a bomb, I started hitting a family friend who had come to the house. At that moment I knew I had to remember him, because he wouldn't be with me anymore.

The terrorists had no right to kill him for some abstract ideal. They were looking to target corporate executives. My father worked hard to get his job at Morgan Bank. He started from the bottom, with a job he got after finishing high school. He was surrounded by guys who graduated from Harvard [and] Yale, but he had worked hard to get his position there.

Fathers are key figures for a kid. In what ways did the absence of your father impact your life and your mother's life?

My father was an only child. His mother was born in Ireland and his father in Great Britain. When he died, he was only 33 years old. My father was my hero. We played sports, my father and I against my mother and my brother, who was older.

I thought my father was invincible. He was my hero, my teammate. But finding out that he had died was devastating. My mother kept the family together.

Fortunately, my brother and I became very involved in the world of wrestling. That made us channel the energy and frustrations we felt, and gave us a lot of discipline. We never forgot my dad, but we pushed ahead as a family. We focused on doing everything the best way, we went to university, we got a job, we started a family. The memory of our father was a great motivating force in my brother's and my life.

Sometimes I wish I could just talk to him. Even now, I already have children. My mother was married five years later to a good man who treated us with great affection.

When did you decide to actively raise your voice for justice in your father's case?

During college in the 1980s and then, upon working at Morgan Bank, where he worked. I've been active since early 1990 when I started to write letters to politicians.

Have you met other sons of terrorism victims? What is their approach politically?

I'm a 9/11 family member also and have been involved with Tuesday's Children group, and with family members of terrorism victims at Guantanamo. Also, I have gotten to know FALN attack survivors.

My cousin, dad's godson, Steve Schlag was murdered on 9/11. I have gotten to know his kids, who moved west shortly after Steve's murder. They have handled his very public death by pursuing skiing and many of the things that he loved in life. God bless them. It's not easy.

The administration of Barack Obama approached the Cuban regime in 2014 without a request for extradition for the terrorist William "Guillermo" Morales. How do you think the dictatorship in Havana read that?

[The] world viewed it as weakness. I am sure Havana too.

In May 2024, the Biden-Harris administration removed Cuba from the list of countries that are not fully cooperating with the United States' anti-terrorist efforts. The State Department argues that the circumstances for that certification changed between 2022 and 2023. How did you feel about that?

Betrayed. And it is not the first time.

In 1999, the Clinton administration granted clemency to imprisoned members of the FALN. Clemency is one of the president's unlimited powers. The terrorists did not ask for it, but President Clinton believed it would give him some political gain.

By doing so, they violated the Victims' Rights and Restitution Act. They should notify the victims before taking action.

Eric Holder was the architect of that clemency. In 2008 he agreed to be the future attorney general of the United States starting in 2009 with the Obama administration, a position that had to be ratified by the Senate.
I testified at Eric Holder's 2009 Senate Judiciary Committee AG hearing, and wrote a piece for The Washington Post about him helping terrorists.

Later, when Obama removed Cuba from the List of Countries Sponsoring Terrorism, it was not a negotiation with Havana, it was a capitulation to Havana. If you want to remove Cuba from the list of terrorist sponsors, the terrorists who are sponsored have to leave Cuba.

It was an affront to our family and the memory of my father.

When Obama went to Cuba in 2016, I was on the island too, at the Guantánamo Base. He was there because terrorists had murdered a family member in the 9/11 attack. It was disheartening for me.

What is the Trooper Werner Foerster and Frank Connor Justice Act? What has been its fate inside the Congress?

The Act stipulates certain steps that Congress must take, such as certifying annually that the terrorists are still in Cuba. And it also expresses that they must have the terrorists back before Cuba is removed from the List of Sponsors of Terrorism.

It is a bill to call for the immediate extradition or return to the United States of convicted felon Joanne Chesimard, William "Guillermo" Morales, and all other fugitives who are receiving safe haven in Cuba to escape prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses committed in the United States.

Now it has to be reintroduced by Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) now that Bob Menendez is gone.

In 2017, Donald Trump considered the return of terrorists to the U.S. an important issue for diplomatic dialogue. Cuban Chancellor, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, defended the asylum of "civil rights fighters from the U.S." Almost 50 years since your father's assassination, do you feel hope?

I have hope that we are closer on Morales than ever before.

I know there is a documentary about your father's case coming out.

The movie is called "Shattered Lives," and it is based on the book (with the same name) that I wrote some years ago. We are hoping it will be soon in a streaming platform. At the same time, we will do some premieres in cities like New York, Phoenix, etc.

I am hoping interviews like yours and the movie will force his return.

https://washingtonstand.com/news/betrayed-joseph–connor–the-bidenharris-administration-and-the-terrorism-sponsored-by-cuba-

U.S. Department of State, January 11, 2021

U.S. Announces Designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism

U.S. Department of State
Office of the Spokesperson
For Immediate Release
Statement by Secretary Michael R. Pompeo
January 11, 2021

The State Department has designated Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism for repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism in granting safe harbor to terrorists.

The Trump Administration has been focused from the start on denying the Castro regime the resources it uses to oppress its people at home, and countering its malign interference in Venezuela and the rest of the Western Hemisphere.

With this action, we will once again hold Cuba's government accountable and send a clear message: the Castro regime must end its support for international terrorism and subversion of U.S. justice.

For decades, the Cuban government has fed, housed, and provided medical care for murderers, bombmakers, and hijackers, while many Cubans go hungry, homeless, and without basic medicine. Members of the National Liberation Army (ELN), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, traveled to Havana to conduct peace talks with the Colombian government in 2017. Citing peace negotiation protocols, Cuba has refused Colombia's requests to extradite ten ELN leaders living in Havana after the group claimed responsibility for the January 2019 bombing of a Bogota police academy that killed 22 people and injured more than 87 others.

Cuba also harbors several U.S. fugitives from justice wanted on or convicted of charges of political violence, many of whom have resided in Cuba for decades. For example, the Cuban regime has refused to return Joanne Chesimard, on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists List for executing New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster in 1973; Ishmael LaBeet, convicted of killing eight people in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1972; Charles Lee Hill, charged with killing New Mexico state policeman Robert Rosenbloom in 1971; and others.

Cuba returns to the SST list following its broken commitment to stop supporting terrorism as a condition of its removal by the previous administration in 2015. On May 13, 2020, the State Department notified Congress that it had certified Cuba under Section 40A(a) of the Arms Export Control Act as “not cooperating fully” with U.S. counterterrorism efforts in 2019.

In addition to the support for international terrorism that is the basis for today’s action, the Cuban regime engages in a range of malign behavior across the region. The Cuban intelligence and security apparatus has infiltrated Venezuela’s security and military forces, assisting Nicholas Maduro to maintain his stranglehold over his people while allowing terrorist organizations to operate. The Cuban government’s support for FARC dissidents and the ELN continues beyond Cuba’s borders as well, and the regime’s support of Maduro has created a permissive environment for international terrorists to live and thrive within Venezuela.

Today’s designation subjects Cuba to sanctions that penalize persons and countries engaging in certain trade with Cuba, restricts U.S. foreign assistance, bans defense exports and sales, and imposes certain controls on exports of dual use items.

The United States will continue to support the Cuban people in their desire for a democratic government and respect for human rights, including freedom of religion, expression, and association. Until these rights and freedoms are respected, we will continue to hold the regime accountable.